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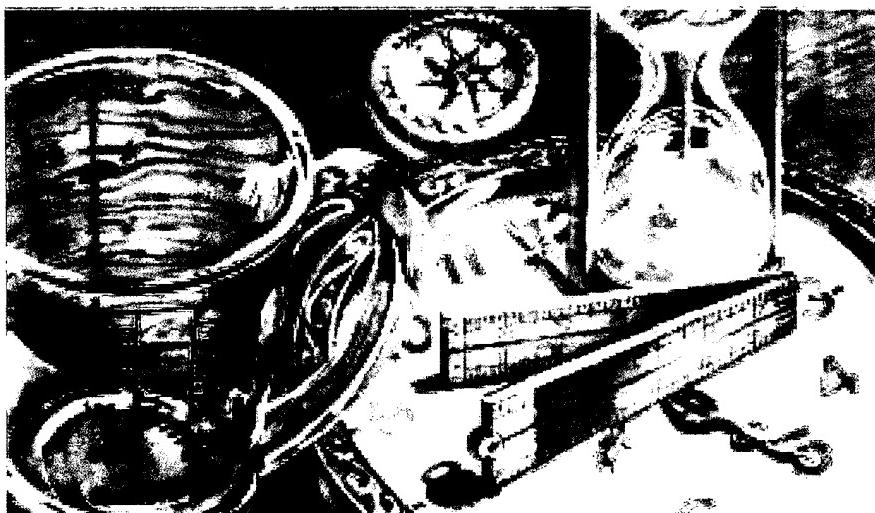
Publications Review Board

"Helping You Honor the Oath"

(U) Beyond Classification: Measuring Up to the 'Appropriateness Standard'

Posted on November 30, 2015

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(U//~~AUO~~) The PRB's main mission is to protect classified information from unauthorized and inadvertent disclosure ¹. In addition, the prepublication review process helps "to ensure that neither the author's performance of duties, the Agency's mission, nor the foreign relations or security of the U.S. are adversely affected by publication"². This means that for current employees and contractors, the PRB may withhold prepublication

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approval if publication will disrupt the individual's or the Agency's ability to support and carry out its mission. If you're familiar with the PRB's review process, you've likely heard this referred to as the "appropriateness standard."³

(U) How does the PRB determine appropriateness?

(U//~~AIUO~~) As a standard procedure, the PRB always asks authors to provide their supervisor's contact information at the time of submission⁴. This allows us to consult with them as subject-matter experts to ensure that the content of the publication, or act of publication itself, would not significantly interfere with the individual's ability to do their job, the Agency's mission, or foreign relations. Based on the supervisor's input and the proposed nature and content of the publication, the Board will then make a final determination after considering any classification concerns.

(U//~~AIUO~~) Many factors contribute to the PRB's determination of appropriateness. Because each situation is unique, it is "assessed case-by-case in terms of the content of the manuscript, as well as the overall context and prevailing circumstances, including but not limited to, consideration of the currency of the subject matter; whether the subject matter is a matter of public concern; the degree to which the topic is related to the author's official duties; whether the material submitted for review is required for a course at an accredited U.S. educational institution at any academic level and, if so, whether distribution is intended to extend beyond classroom use."⁵

(U//~~AIUO~~) An example of the application of the appropriateness standard might be the case of an analyst who specializes on a particular issue or country who wishes to write an op-ed or participate in a public panel discussion about current foreign policy. Based on the criteria set forth in AR 13-10, it is the Board's determination that current employees and contractors should not comment on, opine on, or advocate policy regarding intelligence, national security, or foreign relations because such writings may have a negative effect on the Agency's ability to serve policy makers by fostering an atmosphere of distrust between the Agency and policy makers, between the Agency and other U.S. Government components, or between the U.S. Government and foreign governments.

(U) Still confused about the appropriateness standard? Feel free to contact us!

Notes

1. (U) Also note that, independent from the appropriateness standard, the PRB does not have the authority to release AIUO or FOUO information, even though it is at the UNCLASSIFIED level. [-]

2. (U//~~AIUO~~) AR 13-10, §2b(2). [-]

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3. (U//~~AMC~~) For former employees, classification is the only criteria for review. The appropriateness considerations defined in AR 13-10, §2b(2) are not applied in these cases: "The PRB will review material proposed for publication or public dissemination solely to determine whether it contains any classified information. Permission to publish will not be denied solely because the material may be embarrassing to or critical of the Agency. Former employees, contractors, or non-Agency personnel must obtain the written approval of the PRB prior to publication." AR 13-10, §2f(2).[–]

4. (U) In most cases, the PRB does not require the supervisor consultation for resume reviews – they are, however, still subject to the appropriateness standard.[–]

5. (U//~~AMC~~) AR 13-10, §2g(2). In some cases, the inclusion of a standard disclaimer, as noted in AR 13-10, §2b(4), may mitigate appropriateness concerns. [–]

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